

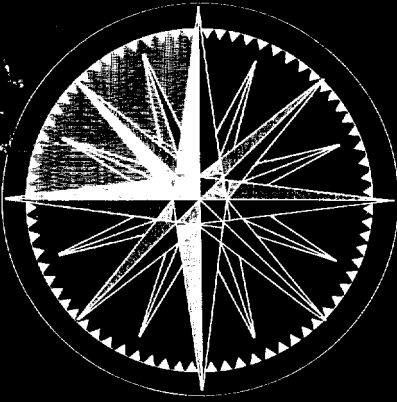
SECRET

Release 2006/10/11 : CIA-RDP79-00927A004700040002-7

4 December 1964

OCI No. 0360/64A

Copy No. 57



SPECIAL REPORT

POPULAR ATTITUDES AND INTERNAL SECURITY IN NORTH VIETNAM

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE

25X1

MORI/CDF

SECRET

GROUP 1 Excluded from automatic
downgrading and declassification

Page Denied

SECRET

4 December 1964

POPULAR ATTITUDES AND INTERNAL SECURITY IN NORTH VIETNAM

For more than ten years the people of North Vietnam have endured a marginal diet, stringent political and social controls, and pressure for a forced-draft work pace, but they have yet to react in such a way as to pose any real threat to the stability of the Communist regime. At present, Hanoi appears to be far more concerned with the threat of subversion directed from outside the country than with any domestic challenge to its authority. Public apathy engendered by the regime's failure to reach its grandiose economic and social goals has apparently been reduced by a more abundant harvest in 1964 and by the outburst of patriotism which followed the US air strike against North Vietnam in August. Current public attitudes, as well as the thoroughness of regime security controls, militate against the success of any externally sponsored subversion.

The External Threat

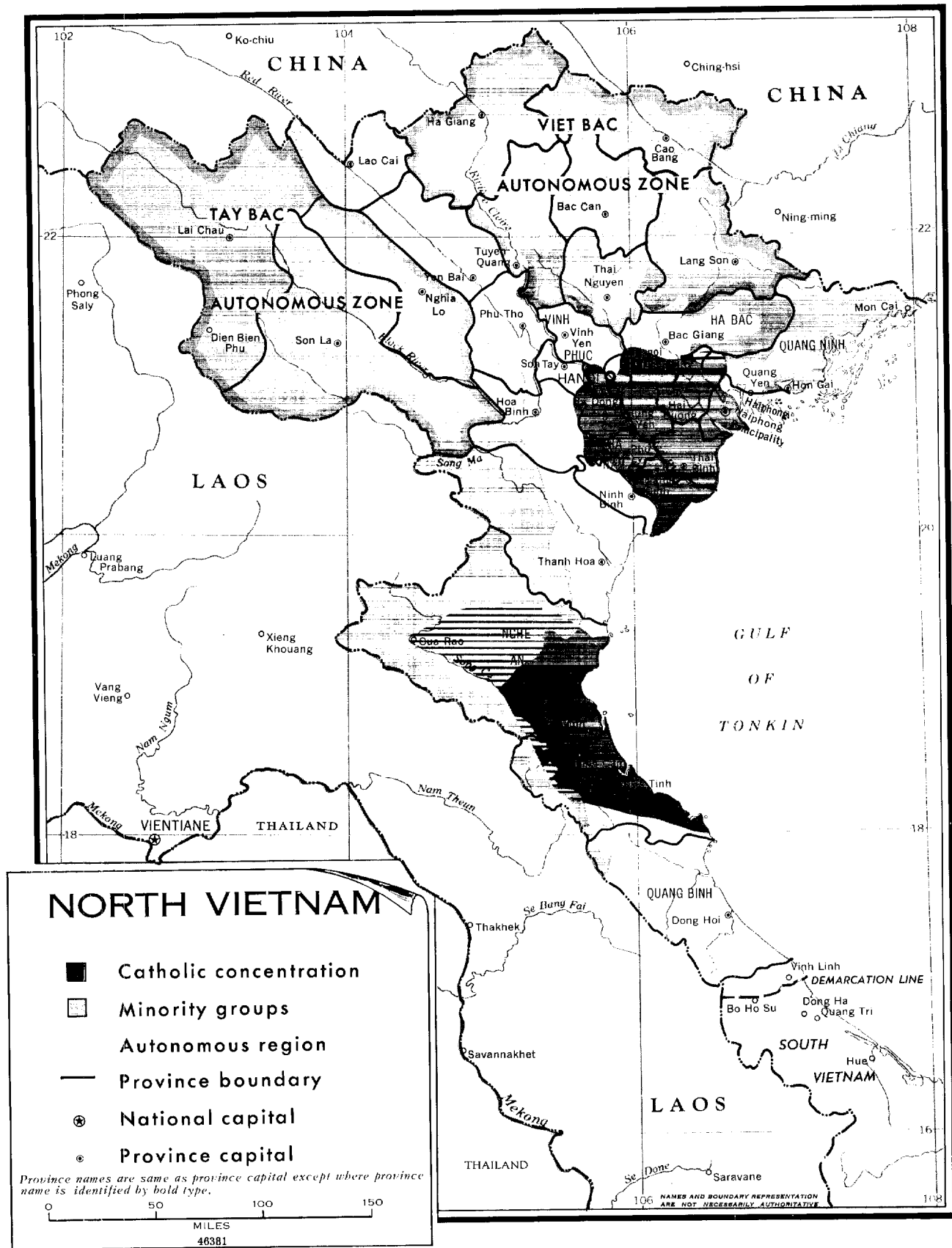
Sabotage raids and harassment operations allegedly conducted by the air and sea forces of the Republic of Vietnam with US support have been vigorously attacked in North Vietnamese propaganda since early spring. Hanoi, in fact, claims to have brought some 100 enemy agents and raiders to trial during 1964. Closely connected with this concern over foreign-sponsored subversion is fear that the US will initiate direct military action against North Vietnam, most likely by aerial bombardment. Vigorous civil defense measures have been taken since the 5 August US air strike against North Vietnamese naval facilities.

In other measures this year which appear to be a response

to the threat of foreign-initiated subversion and to the prospect of direct US military action against North Vietnam, Hanoi has moved to strengthen the military establishment and the security apparatus. Both the regular armed forces and the paramilitary public security units and militia appear to have expanded their training programs, and the latter two organizations seem to have been increased in size. The regime claims that these forces have played a key role in apprehension of "infiltrators and raiders."

Hanoi's most important public security organization appears to be the so-called "Armed People's Security Force" (APSF). This force has many of the earmarks of a regular military organization and apparently works

SECRET



CLASSIFIED MATERIAL ON REVERSE OF PAGE

SECRET

closely with the army. It is, however, under the direction of the Ministry of Public Security. Estimates of its size range from 30,000 to 100,000 men. Many former regular army soldiers were incorporated into the force several years ago when a number of army divisions were consolidated into brigades. There are some indications that the APSF is deployed to maximize security force strength near the Demilitarized Zone, and along the Laotian border where overland infiltration by raider teams could be expected.

Hanoi has also intensified security precautions at strategic locations--including communications complexes, road construction projects, and storehouses--where it apparently fears hit-and-run sabotage.

The Tonkin Gulf

The crisis atmosphere following the Tonkin Gulf naval incidents in early August provided Hanoi with a new opportunity to focus attention on security matters. There is ample evidence that the public was greatly concerned over external attack during the period, and genuinely determined to defend the "homeland." During 1964, and especially after August, many additional factory workers--both male and female--were enrolled in militia units under the direction of the factory party committee. Some have been given simple military training using rifles and gre-

nades. The Ministry of National Defense, moreover, has organized security programs for all state-owned enterprises and is giving instruction in basic military tactics, fire fighting, first aid, and patrol duties.

In urban residential areas, the party apparatus has been used to develop neighborhood security organizations. In the rural areas, party members have been attached to the local security forces to provide increased political direction and guidance. In Quang Binh Province, for example, the provincial party committee assigned all young party members to the local militia, appointed rural party secretaries as political commissars of militia units, and required all party members to participate actively in militia duties.

Internal Security

While the above steps seemed primarily designed to bolster defense against external attack, they also resulted in tightened control over the local population. Even prior to 1964, however, over 10 percent of the people above 15 years of age were involved in the formal security apparatus. Like other Communist countries, North Vietnam also has networks of informers and mass organizations to act as semiofficial security agents for the state.

From time to time since the end of the war with France

SECRET

SECRET

in 1954, Hanoi has faced significant outbreaks of internal dissidence. It has been able to quell these uprisings, however, and has usually attempted to reduce the causes of unrest. One of the most spectacular outbreaks of dissidence occurred in 1956 in a largely Catholic area of Nghe An Province where the peasants revolted against land reform extremes.

Although Hanoi's troops speedily controlled the uprising, the leadership evidently drew a clear lesson from the experience. Recognizing that any widespread peasant discontent could completely disrupt the agriculturally based economy, the leaders have since been exceedingly cautious in their attempts to force a reorganization of the social and economic structure of the rural areas. Agriculture in North Vietnam today is probably less socialized than that in any other Communist country except Poland.

No widespread peasant resistance has been reported since 1956. In 1963, the regime did disclose that large numbers of peasants had withdrawn from co-operatives in at least two northern provinces with large populations of ethnic minority peoples. The regime's acceptance of this situation, together with its caution in pressing agricultural reform, suggests that it still respects the resistance potential of the Vietnamese peasant.

There is little evidence that the severe harvest shortfalls from 1960 through 1963 sparked anything other than isolated acts of reprisal against government procurement policies. Most peasants apparently were successful in hoarding their own minimum food needs before the balance of the harvest was passed to state storage depots. There is considerable evidence that this practice was abetted by local government cadres and that Hanoi made no real effort to block it. It appears, however, that 1964 has brought some improvement in living conditions. The spring harvest by all indications was the best in several years, and the fall harvest now in progress is being touted by the regime as a "bumper" crop.

Hanoi has also moved to quash the dissidence potential of the 700,000-800,000 Catholics in North Vietnam. Using the standard Communist techniques, the regime cut off the local church from Rome, and attempted to impose its own hierarchy and training apparatus and to dilute the strength and force of Catholicism as an ideology among the population. Although not completely successful, these measures have considerably sapped the strength of the Catholic opposition to Hanoi over the past ten years. At the present time, the Catholic threat is probably little more than a nuisance.

SECRET

SECRETEthnic Minorities

A somewhat different problem is posed by the non-Vietnamese minority peoples who number some two million and are concentrated in the northwest near the borders of Laos and China. Traditionally, the minority peoples have been extremely hostile toward the ethnic Vietnamese. They have maintained their cultural unity by retreating to the less hospitable hilly regions, leaving the more desirable agricultural lowlands to the Vietnamese. Hanoi administers the areas with large minority populations as "autonomous zones," using the minority peoples in positions of local responsibility. The state's presence in such areas is much less effective than it is in other parts of the country, and regime officials have referred to these areas as "lairds of bandits."

In an attempt to assert its control in minority areas, the government has inaugurated an ambitious colonization program designed to dilute the concentration of minority peoples with ethnic Vietnamese. The migration movement itself, however, has created additional security problems. Half a million people had been transplanted by mid-1964 and many were less than enthusiastic about their pioneer-

ing assignment. The settlers were far from home--most of them without their families--their work was hard and living conditions were probably extremely austere. Some of these settlers were drawn from the 30,000 repatriates from Thailand [redacted] 25X1

[redacted] 25X1
[redacted] Nevertheless the government apparently has been able to keep the great majority of these people in the resettlement area and intends to push ahead with the program.

Popular Apathy

Lack of enthusiasm for regime goals and directives appears to be widespread and is probably of considerably greater concern to Hanoi than the prospect of active dissidence. Considerable public enthusiasm existed for the goals projected by the regime when it came to power ten years ago, but this has dwindled over the years. Although some progress has been made, living conditions remain hard and difficulties have been compounded by the inefficiency and blundering of party and government cadres.

Much of the domestic propaganda output is dedicated to combating this problem. Intellectuals

SECRET

SECRET

are brought to task for failing to apply a Marxian interpretation to social developments, and for not trying to support state objectives in their jobs. Students, especially those who are denied further study by state directive, are frequently criticized for their failure to accept work assignments gracefully.

In good part, these problems reflect Hanoi's failure to make any real dent in the "bourgeois" thinking of the masses. Domestic propaganda routinely protests against the promotion of private interests at the expense of the state, and criticizes lenient treatment of speculators, embezzlers, and those guilty of mismanagement and misappropriation of state property.

Special incentives in the form of commendations and awards

have been introduced to encourage citizens to help in apprehending this type of lawbreaker. During the past year, the regime has called for a greater effort by all citizens, particularly management officials, to care for and protect state property. By and large, however, Hanoi has failed to get really tough over such problems, doubtless because it recognizes that they are at least in part a product of the Vietnamese temperament. So far, the regime seems to consider these difficulties well within manageable bounds.

While the regime will continue to be faced with dissatisfaction and apathy, there appears to be little prospect of any significant internal dissidence or any successful program of subversion directed from abroad in the predictable future. (SECRET)

* * *

SECRET

SECRET

SECRET